

PAN PIPES

Panpipes are sets of graduated flutes that are joined together in a raft or bunch shape. The sound is produced by blowing across the top of the holes. The tubes have no finger holes and the lower end is usually stopped. Panpipes have been known for over 2000 years and specimens have been found in most parts of the world. Materials include clay, stone, cane, wood, and, more recently, metal and plastic. They have been made in sets of two pipes to as many as sets of twenty-five or more. Pan pipes are presently most popular in the folk music of Hungary, Peru, and Africa.

MATERIALS:

About 5' of stiff plastic tubing with a diameter of 3/8" to 1"

Bamboo is used in most authentic pipes of this sort

Plugs for the tubes (rubber stoppers, cork, or plasticine clay will work)

Tape or glue to hold pipes together

TOOLS:

Sharp knife or saw if bamboo is used (see options)

ASSEMBLY:

1. Keep in mind the simple principle that the longer the pipe, the lower the pitch. You can make a set of pipes of any number of individual pipes of whatever lengths you like. Interesting scale combinations can be created in this fashion. Adjustments of the pitch can be made by trimming off a little length at a time or by pushing the stoppers farther into the tube. Note, however, that you cannot make the pipes lower by adding on if too much is cut off. If this happens, save the pipe for the next higher pitch and cut a new segment.
2. If you prefer, cut a set that makes a specific scale. Pan pipes are most often found in this form. You may do this by ear or use the following measurements as a guide. These lengths should approximate a G major scale if a 5/8" diameter tubing is used.

do	re	me	fa	sol	la	ti	do
8 3/8"	7 1/2"	6 1/2"	6"	5 3/8"	4 3/4"	4 1/4"	4"

OPTIONS :

If you make the pipes of bamboo, you may have to drill through the natural joints of the wood to get the proper lengths or you can use the joints as the stopped end and trim from the other end to the desired pitch. The pipes may be glued together for more stability. A decorative strip of cloth can be glued around the pipes. Sticks may be laced on either side of the tubes to give a varied decorative effect.

PLAYING SUGGESTIONS

To hear the Pan pipes played well is a most amazing experience. South Americans, for instance, play them with great facility and speed. Playing the Pan pipes involves the same blowing technique as blowing into a bottle. With a little practice in moving the pipes accurately across the mouth opening, some facility can be developed. It takes a lot of wind to play the pipes so take a deep breath as often as necessary.

Note: You can hand out single pipes to a group of people and play them in the fashion of hand bells. Each person can be responsible for a pitch or two within the song thus coordinating the efforts into a coherent body.